

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

All the Year Round

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AT HER MERCY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LOST SIR MASSINGERD," "A PERFECT TREASURE," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XLII. THE RECURRENCE OF A PHENOMENON.

THE shock of Judith's death, falling upon a constitution already weakened by illness, and which had lost that elasticity which hope alone can give, was almost fatal to Evy herself. She suffered a severe relapse, and so soon as she was strong enough to endure it, her immediate removal to the southern coast was insisted on by Dr. Burne. She was, however, even more unwilling to leave Dunwich than she had been before; it seemed to her that their quitting it was but too likely to give a colour of truth to the malicious scandals that were in circulation against her uncle; and though there was no pleasure for her in the old place, there were tender memories about it still that flattered a melancholy from which she never expected, and did not desire, to escape. There was no longer any apprehension of meeting her former lover, for he had left the Park on the day after his wife's funeral, and gone abroad, taking the old lord with him—it was said to try the German waters for his gout. The Hall was shut up—as it had never been within the memory of man—and the cards that the county dealt out with a liberal hand, expressing its sympathy with the calamity that had befallen the House of Heyton, accumulated, unacknowledged, in the housekeeper's room. The trite simile of the play of Hamlet without the Prince could alone depict the condition of Dunwich without its lord. The one great topic of talk that had served it for generations being thus ruthlessly withdrawn,

it fell into a sort of conversational collapse, during which an opportunity was afforded to Mrs. Sanboy for airing her speculations respecting the Thames Tunnel; and to Captain Crewkerne (though he could not, in one sense, obtain a hearing) to give repeated personal narratives (illustrated with walnut diagrams) of the battle of the Nile. But of all this Evy knew nothing; she asked no questions, and Mr. Hulet, acting on the Doctor's advice, volunteered no information. When she was first taken—for not only did she evince no volition in the matter, but was so weak as to be actually carried thither—to the Isle of Wight, she expressed some faint admiration, but more surprise, at the beauty of the furnished villa on the Undercliff which had been secured for their residence.

"Oh, Uncle Angelo—it is lovely; but are you sure that you can afford this even for a few weeks?"

"My darling, we shall be here for many a month, I trust;" said he softly. "You forget that I have got back my own again. Captain Heyton, who knows all, has repaid me every farthing, with interest. A handsomer, though, at the same time, a more distressing communication, I have never read, than that which he wrote me within twenty-four hours of your visit to the Park."

Evy shuddered; for the remembrance of that night still haunted her; and she did not even ask to see the Captain's letter.

The manifest improvement in her uncle's spirits, indeed, was evidently a source of pleasure to her, while the loveliness of the scenes about her did not fail in time to charm her eye; but, nevertheless a supreme melancholy seemed to have

taken possession of her being. When Mr. Hulet suggested that she should invite her old friend Mrs. Storks, who was most constant in her inquiries and correspondence, to visit them, she declined to do so.

"I like nothing so well as to be alone with you, uncle."

It was evident that she shrank from society of every kind, though Dr. Burne had especially enjoined that she should have it. The colourless tranquil existence that had been well enough while she was an invalid, was no longer suited for her now that she had recovered her bodily strength. It evidently encouraged the dejection which threatened to take permanent possession of her mind. Poor Mr. Hulet was at his wits-end for a remedy.

"Is there anything, my darling—any sort of change that you would seem to fancy," he inquired one day, in something like despair. "We have had this place for nearly a year, my dear, and it rests with you as to whether we shall renew the lease."

"I am quite happy here, dear uncle."

"No, you are not, my darling; you are only resigned to be here, and resignation is not the virtue which becomes a girl—till she is six-and-thirty. What do you say to going abroad for a year or two; all places are alike to me, except that particular Spa, which, as I hear, Lord Dirleton has been patronising for the last twelve months. Talk of bear-leaders; I am sure I pity his poor nephew more than any tutor with 'a tenth transmitter of a foolish face' in his charge. Come, where shall we go, Evy?"

"Would it be very disagreeable for you to go back to Dunwich, Uncle Angelo?" returned she, earnestly.

"To me? Certainly not, my dear, especially as the Hall is shut up; and in the absence of its proprietor, we shall have a right to breathe."

It was astonishing how like Mr. Hulet had grown to his former self, during the last few months; the weight of Judith's foot having been removed, his character had sprung back again like a bent sapling, and resumed its old direction; he was as caustic as ever, except that his irony had more good humour in it than of old; only in one thing was there a marked change—he still looked as askance at a bottle of medicine as a teetotaller on a brandy flask.

According to Evy's wish, the little household, which included but themselves and the faithful Jane—for the villa had

been hired with its servants—returned to Dunwich in the ensuing November. It was but one proof of the unhappy lack of interest with which Evy Carthew now regarded all external matters, that she took it for granted that they were returning to Seymour's Home. The carriage stopped, however, short of that edifice, at the gate of another house.

"There is some mistake," began Evy, roused from a long reverie of sad and silent thoughts.

"Nay, my dear, not so," returned her uncle, smiling; "since you would come back to the old place, I have brought you to the old home—'The Cedars!'"

At the open door stood Mr. and Mrs. Mellish to welcome them. Every room, under their supervision, had been rendered, at Mr. Hulet's request, as like as possible to what it had been when Evy had left it for Balcombe. In her own little boudoir stood the book-case with her favourite volumes, the piano stood in its proper place, and even the pictures upon the wall were in the very spaces they had occupied before. The care and kindness that this manifested upon her uncle's part overcame the poor girl even more than the surprise itself.

"How much he loves me," thought she, and then reproached herself in that, since his wealth and ease of mind had been restored to him, and he had seemed to need no especial attendance and comfort at her hands, she had neglected him, and given way to her own selfish sorrows. In future she would do her best to be more cheerful, for his sake, even if cheerfulness did not return to her of itself, as there was hope it would, now that she would be able to employ herself actively as of old—for life on the Undercliff had necessarily been idle and aimless. Her first walk in the old garden gave her an exquisite pleasure, nor was the conviction it induced that she had been mistaken in supposing that she had lost the capacity for enjoyment, by any means unwelcome. The day, for a November afternoon, was bright, and its sunshine showed no change in any of her favourite haunts; the fountain leapt and sparkled as of old, the gold-fish winked their fins and shoaled together as though they recognised their former mistress: the Cedar threw its self-same layer of shade above the seat she had loved so well, from which were to be seen the stately woods of Dirleton; the porches of Seymour's Home, in one of which that dread revelation had

been made to her of Judith's power; and the grey church, beneath whose shadow lay her rival, against whom not a spark of anger lingered within her, but only divinest pity.

She asked Mr. Mellish—as until then she had never dared to do—how, and in what frame of mind she had died: but he could tell her little. Mrs. Heyton had scarcely spoken to him at all, but had seemed to listen while he prayed aloud. Her husband had come in, and, after some whispered communication, kissed her: but the old lord—"for reasons you will understand," said the Rector, significantly—"declined to take leave of her."

"Was anything said of me, or of my uncle?" faltered Evy, uncertain whether her companion knew all or no.

"Not by her, except that a few minutes before her death, which happened without pain, she breathed your name; I heard, however, all her sad story from Captain Heyton's lips, who had also informed his uncle."

"Surely there was no need for that," sighed Evy, pitifully.

"I am not so sure, my dear," returned the Rector, gravely. "At all events, I can imagine that to John Heyton it seemed that not a minute was to be lost in confessing to Lord Dirleton all that had been done, in order that, if possible, reparation should be made, while she who had wrought the wrong still lived. The old lord advanced the whole sum at once, which his nephew could not have done without much delay, and the last words that her husband whispered to the dying woman, gave her the assurance that that had been accomplished. As to his telling me, he deemed he owed it to your uncle's reputation (which, it seems, had been maliciously aspersed by this unhappy woman) that he should let the truth be known. But I persuaded him to reveal it no further. I argued, Evy, not justly I allow, but still as I know you yourself would have done, that it was better to shield the memory of the dead from infamy, than to set your uncle right with his neighbours. 'But Mr. Hulet is an innocent man!' groaned the poor Captain. He was a spectacle, Evy, most piteous to witness; for his sense of right was at war with all the best feelings of his nature. 'True,' said I; 'but your uncle is also innocent. And, ill as he is, it will go nigh to kill him if he hears men say that one of his own

blood—and that one the most dear to him—had received as his wife's dower hush-money, and even that through fraud.' That staggered the poor fellow. Otherwise, if he alone had had to bear it, he would have shrunk from neither blame nor shame. He had been ignorant, it is true, of his wife's infamy; but his conscience did not hold him guiltless for his conduct in another matter; he had married, without loving her, out of mere pique and anger because you would not desert your uncle in his extremity, or permit him—John Heyton—to give up his brilliant prospects and ally himself with poverty. That thought wrung his very soul, I know, and, I doubt not, wrings it still."

Here Mr. Hulet and Mrs. Mellish fortunately joined them from the house, and spared Evy the embarrassment of a reply. She would scarcely have known what to say for the poor Captain; for even the plea that Judith had put in for him, of his having at a most opportune moment fallen a prey to her wiles and charms, had scarcely seemed a sufficient explanation of his conduct. To judge by her uncle's case, as well as by her lover's, it really seemed that men were wont to give way to promptings of the wildest impulse, such as women would be ashamed to obey. Nevertheless, it is certain that Evy had forgiven both offenders; and that, with regard to the absent one, he was by no means forgotten. Whether his heart was wrung or not, he was far from being in good health—as she heard from more than one quarter—and for that it might, at least, be permitted to her to be sorry.

Mr. Hulet and his niece had not been settled down in their own home for more than a fortnight, when news arrived that the old lord was coming back to the Hall. Evy's heart went faster than Dr. Burne would have approved of its doing—for a continuance—when Mrs. Mellish dropped in at The Cedars one morning with these tidings. All, of course, was over between her and Captain Heyton for ever, even if there had not, as before, remained that inseparable bar to their union in the ancestor whose picture had resumed its place in Mr. Hulet's study. She would have died rather than a second time have been the cause of quarrel between uncle and nephew, even had the chance been afforded her; but, still her heart did give a throb or two at the idea of her once-beloved "Jack's" return.

"The old lord has a companion with him," continued Mrs. Mellish, with the air of one who could say more if she chose.

"A companion?" observed Mr. Hulet, drily, from behind his newspaper. "I hope it is somebody respectable."

"For shame, Mr. Hulet," answered the Rector's wife. "How can you be so wicked? It is somebody whom you both know very well and like very much, and who has been with him for some time abroad—a relation of his own. Now, come, you can guess!"

"If you mean Captain Heyton, you have described him in an unnecessarily circuitous manner," observed Mr. Hulet, even more drily than before. He disliked Lord Dirleton on his own account, and was displeased with the Captain (though, otherwise, he did not dislike him) upon Evy's.

"Captain Heyton is not likely to be coming home, poor fellow," answered Mrs. Mellish, a little piqued by this reception of her great news; "they say that, so far from getting better, he is but the shadow of his former self. It is Mr. De Coucy who is expected at the Park to-night with Lord Dirleton."

"I shall be most sincerely pleased to see him!" exclaimed Mr. Hulet, warmly.

Evy made no remark, and looked cast down rather than pleased; but, then, she was not thinking of Mr. De Coucy at all.

Dr. Burne, whose habit it still was to occasionally visit The Cedars, "to look at Miss Evy," as he called it, although his professional services were no longer required ("Hulet's leaving off those drugs of his was a shameful grievance," he would complain, and had deprived him of a very handsome income), happened to call the next morning upon his whilome patient. He found her, not with her uncle, as usual, but in the drawing-room alone, and looking pale and troubled.

"You had not your proper allowance of sleep, Miss, last night," he observed critically.

"Oh, yes, I had, Doctor."

"Then you must have had bad dreams. Did you happen to dream, my dear, of an old gentleman of sixty-six, or so, coming to demand your hand in marriage, and who would not be denied. It was not I, of course, since that would not have been disagreeable to you, but another old gentleman."

Evy shook her head.

"Well, now, that's odd," continued the Doctor, "because you really have such an

admirer. I happened to meet him on my early round this morning, and he detained me with your praises to that extent that several persons lost the advantage of my presence at their coming into the world, and also at their going out of it. Do you know any dandified old gentleman, who goes without gloves in November, the better to exhibit a finger ring that Pyrgoteles made for Alexander?"

"Ah, you have seen dear Mr. De Coucy! I hope he is well," said Evy, with that show of earnest cheerfulness which ladies have always at command, but which cannot deceive a doctor, even if he be not also a husband.

"Yes, Evy, I have seen Mr. De Coucy," answered the Doctor, his manner suddenly changing from gay to grave, "and heard many things from him which will still have an interest for you, I hope. Do you remember the last time—more than two years ago—that you and I were alone together in this very room, and what we talked about?"

"I do, indeed, Doctor," answered Evy, with a sudden blush, "and the remembrance is so painful to me, that I must entreat you not to revert to it. Forgive me for speaking thus, old friend," added she, hurriedly; "I know it is your goodwill and tenderness for me that prompts you to speak on such a subject; yet it is to them that I appeal for silence."

The Doctor shrugged his shoulders; "My dear Miss Evy, I am dumb. How is your Uncle Angelo, for I came upstairs without dropping into the study, which is a waste of time, since nothing now is to be got by it. He is in the rughest health of course: not dyspeptic on account of the argument on duplex sensations we had the other night—though I thought that would have delivered him into my hands again."

"I am afraid he is quite well," said Evy, smiling, "though you certainly did excite him very much."

"Well, I could not give in to him, you know. As to his notion that we are all sometimes conscious of present scenes and conversations having taken place, in some previous state of existence—that is to say, in no time—nothing, in my opinion, can be more fancifully ridiculous; on the other hand, it must be confessed that certain circumstances in our lives seem to have a tendency to recur. This time two years, for instance, I was standing by this window, and you in that very chair

yonder, when we beheld a portent—a miracle—namely, Lord Dirleton walking in Dunwich Street; and there, treading (notwithstanding all those German waters) as gingerly as ever over the stones—there he is again."

"Poor old gentleman," said Evy, pitifully, "I am sorry he is no better." But she did not run to the window, as she had done on the previous occasion, but went on with her needle-work as before.

"Such things recur in cycles, I suppose," continued the Doctor, gravely. "Every two years, perhaps, he will cross the street just as he is doing now, and come and call at The Cedars."

"Call at The Cedars? He is surely not coming here?" exclaimed Evy, excitedly.

"Most certainly he is, my dear—I should say, straight here, only that his sailing is a little circular, by reason of the more nobbly stones."

"I trust he will not put my uncle out again—I mean that there will be no more wretched quarrels," sighed Evy, apprehensively.

"No, no, Mr. De Couey is with him, whose common friendship will bind them to keep the peace: and besides, the poor old lord is in no mood for fighting now, with this new trouble hanging over him.

"Trouble, what trouble?" inquired Evy, nervously, and putting down her work.

"That is a subject upon which you have forbidden me to speak, my darling—Hark! There's his ring at the bell again. What a tendency circumstances have to recur—especially in bell-ringing. And now he is gone into the study, just as he did before," continued the Doctor, with an air of philosophic abstraction. "How very curious and remarkable!"

JEMMY BIBB.

We had just returned from Ireland, where the regiment had seen a deal of "service," at elections contested to a frightful extent, before the ballot times, and were quartered in a rural district in the West of England. There the soldier tired could solace himself with love and wine, and did so to a great extent. There were plenty of balls and dinner parties, and the loveliest girls of the district threw themselves into our arms, and whirled with us round the floor of the various town halls and assembly rooms. I myself participated largely in these frivolities, in company with

my friend, Mr. Bibb, or "Jemmy Bibb," the well known jester of the corps, who really occupied something of the position that the "inimitable Shakesperian Droll" does at popular circuses, and who might have been described in the language of the bills, as "perpetually enlivening the entertainment with his chaste repartees and sidesplitting conceits." He had a full pink face, a rolling eye, and short curly hair. He was always up to fun and practical joking. He was also one of those people whom everybody knew, even at remote corners of the kingdom, and was always familiarly spoken of, and to, as "Jemmy."

It was Jemmy who proposed that some of us should attend a Fancy Ball, given some thirty or forty miles away, where he said some fun—Jemmy's favourite divinity—was certain to be up. No one was much inclined to share in the festivity, most of our fellows feeling that they would have a richer and more economical treat in the recital of his adventures, by Jemmy Bibb himself, on his return. Mr. Bibb, however, insisted that I should attend him as his aide-de-camp, and I consented to do so. There was to be no fuss or expense about dress. Jemmy produced a couple of College caps and gowns, which he said made the "handiest" fancy dress in the world, having in his eye, I really believe, the free and easy gentry who attend park meetings, and to whom this dignified costume extends a sort of professional license.

We attended the ball, which, it must be said, was as dreary and stupid as such things usually are. Jemmy Bibb, even, was not in his usual "form," and did not display any Shakesperian conceits, and I was much relieved when, at break of day, we came away, and took the first train at six o'clock, with the intention of returning to quarters.

It was a cold morning, and the human form which has been up all night is inclined to place the amount of chilliness at some degrees lower than it really is. Jemmy Bibb, in no very good humour, had muffled up his throat, and wrapping himself snugly in his gown, had closed his eyes. I had done so likewise, omitting, however, the gown, an element which, however befitting a jester, seemed to me to want dignity, in a person not possessing such facetious recommendations. We both presently fell asleep.

When I woke up, the sun was shining, and I noticed that our carriage had, as

Jemmy would say, "increased and multiplied" to the extent of a lady and two girls, who appeared to be daughters. They were looking at us curiously. I could not speak for myself, though I had an instinct that I presented that air of disreputable coming to pieces which attends on sitting up all night; but my companion's appearance could not have impressed any one favourably. His college cap was awry, his mouth open, his head bent into the corner of the carriage like a marionette, his hands twisted from their position, while remains of the red paint, imperfectly brushed away, were still visible on his nose. Rather shocked at this degrading spectacle I touched him, so as to let him know ladies were present. Bibb, grumbling at being disturbed, pulled himself together, shivered, and declared it was "just the morning for a funeral service," and that he felt as gloomy as though he had been "sitting under" some one for two hours.

The mother and her daughters were still watching our proceedings, as well they might, with curiosity, when I whispered to Jemmy that as it was past eight o'clock, and we were likely to meet with decent, respectable people, he should get rid of his fantastic dress, make some apology, &c. "Nothing of the kind," said Jemmy, aloud. "Why should I? These ladies will understand. What I have worn elsewhere I'm not ashamed of here. Beside I want to keep myself warm. I am sure, madam," he said, addressing himself to the senior lady, "this little eccentricity of mine doesn't offend you."

The lady, who seemed a dry precise person, of the crackly, specular order, answered with a cold bow. The two girls smiled. Jemmy, as he said later, saw they were up to mischief. He could not understand, though, how cherries could have been reared on a thistle.

"Yes," went on Jemmy, "I and my friend here have been at work labouring in the vineyard when other people were in their beds. Such is life. No one will ever give us credit till we are removed to another and a brighter sphere."

The lady drew away her skirts, and said sourly, "If you are speaking seriously, sir, that is the only place where credit is to be obtained for our actions in this life. It is not a subject to be spoken of with levity."

Jemmy's eyes twinkled, as he took her measure. "I'm a sinner, ma'am, that I know. Ask my friend here, he'll tell you

what a worm I am—a thorough going worm. He's one, too, though of an inferior description. For that matter, we're all sinners and worms, at least such of the party as are of the male sex."

I thought this buffoonery in bad taste, and frowned at Jemmy. "You must not," I said apologetically to the ladies, "take my friend literally. He is a humourist in his way, and accustomed to audiences of another description. I assure you he means well, and it is only his way."

No notice was taken of this apology; and Jemmy, disdaining to exert himself, relapsed into slumber. Suddenly I noticed that the three ladies were whispering eagerly, their heads together. I caught the words, "Good gracious! impossible! Oh I couldn't have been so—" This increased into a sort of agitation; and when Jemmy roused himself with a yawn, and declared that he was fit for nothing but a pulpit, the mamma leant forward, and touching him on the arm, whispered to him eagerly, her daughters listening with smiling ardour. Jemmy shook his head in a deprecating fashion. But the communication was renewed, and the young ladies struck in eagerly. And then Jemmy seemed to yield to whatever it was that they pressed. This proceeding mystified me, particularly as there was no attempt to take me into confidence. In a few moments all seemed to be intimacy; and Jemmy, who was never slack in improving an opportunity, was pouring out impressive revelations into the eager ears of his female listeners. Rather nettled at such neglect on the part of both friend and stranger, I attempted a remark as to the prospects of the weather, but to which no attention was paid. I just caught stray words here—"papa will be enchanted;" and reflected with not a little envy on the luck of certain persons—this Jemmy Bibb—a mere tumbler, a grinner through a horse collar, always contriving to fall upon his legs; while I— But here was the train stopping at a rustic station.

Over the railing could be seen a light phaeton waiting, a village church in the distance, red tiles mixed with the trees; while a wiry, sunburnt gentleman, in a black felt hat and Oxford grey suit, was standing on the platform, swinging a stick.

"There's papa!" cried one of the young ladies.

"You run and tell him, dear," said her mamma.

She did so, and in a moment he was at the door.

"Why," he said, in a blunt way, "here's a surprise! Extremes do meet, as they say."

"As one sees a dog, sir, running round after his own tail," answered Jemmy, promptly and gaily; "and no harm to either dog or tail."

The young ladies laughed—their father looked grim.

"Well," he said, "if I like a smooth, gravel walk myself, I can allow for the man who goes crashing through the bushes. Come up and breakfast with us. Do. You will give me pleasure."

Jemmy consented, and jumped out. I did the same, on the rather languid invitation—"your friend may as well come, too." And, in a few moments, I and Bibb, the parson—for such he was—and one of his daughters, were seated in the phaeton. Mamma and their other child would walk.

"Well, I know nothing more curious than this," said the parson, smiling, "to think that I should be sitting opposite you in my own carriage! I wish McSorley saw us—for that matter, I wish the bishop saw us."

"I suppose," said Bibb, laughing, "he wouldn't touch me with a pair of tongs—to say nothing of a mop's head; I'm too profane a fellow for his lordship."

"I fear he has some such idea; but what would he say to me? But, I don't care. They call me, you know, a muscular parson. Let 'em."

This was certainly offensive to poor Bibb, whose ribald reputation must have, indeed, spread over a wide area. I came to the rescue, rather generously—

"Why," said I, "there was a bishop dining with us, and you and he got on very well together; at least, he laughed loudly at your stories."

"That's it! that's it!" said the parson. "And so would Brindley. But the cream of the thing is—"

"Is—on your breakfast table, I hope," said Bibb. "I fear I shall punish it." The parson smiled. The carriage drew up at a charmingly rustic vicarage, through whose window we saw the breakfast laid out. We entered.

"Oh, I declare," said Bibb, "I forgot I had on this bit of foolery; but it was so cold."

"Foolery, sir!" said the parson, sternly. "Don't call it that. We shall fall out, I fear, if these ugly words are used."

"Oh," said Bibb, hastily, "I didn't mean

anything. But what must the ladies have thought of me!"

"Oh, it was so characteristic," said the girls, who had now come up, "exactly like what had been described to us. Oh, do keep it on." Thus everyone knew Jemmy Bibb!

"Oh," said the parson, smiling, "you must maintain the character, and I really like that sort of rough consistency. I can tell you the bishop will be amused when this reaches him—which it will of course—I mean he'll be so amused at my position. Oh keep it on, keep it on!" Decidedly this was the oddest clergyman we had ever encountered, though, it must be admitted Mr. Bibb's experience in this class of the community was of a limited kind. Thus pressed, Mr. Bibb retained his domino. My costume was no less eccentric—a full evening suit, white tie, rather draggled "button-hole," all worn in the full glare of the sun. But they did not mind me.

Presently we were seated at breakfast. I was in a perfect state of bewilderment, but Jemmy was perfectly at home—well he might be, considering the admiring looks that were turned on him: and I could not but feel a little hurt that such gifts as his should have won him such fame and consideration.

"So you come from Grundyborough," said the parson—naming the town where the fancy ball had been held. "You found the ground hard enough there."

"Ground hard enough!"

"Just the place for you, though. I'm sure you gathered mobs there in the circus or the Agricultural Hall, or some such monstrous edifice—aye, and filled it too. Thousands crushing each other to death, and all that. And yet," added the parson, looking round with a pitying smile, "I might stand bareheaded next the parish pump, and no one would stop. Why? Because I don't carry a cruet of cayenne-pepper or a bottle of hot sauce in my pocket. There's the difference."

Cayenne-pepper! Parish pump! Hot sauce! All this was most mysterious. I, however, struck in—

"It is wonderful," said I, "how well they do things at Grundyborough. That ball last night was as good as anything of the sort we ever attended. Everything in the best style, all the long noses, punchinellos, cavaliers, monks, nuns, and the rest."

I saw Bibb frowning at me. Astonishment and alarm settled on the faces round.

"Went to a fancy ball!" was repeated on all sides.

"Monks, nuns!" said the parson.

"Yes," I said, "this was my fancy dress, such as it was, and that was his."

Suddenly the clergyman went off into a roar of laughter, "Oh, good, too good! I see it now. You will go to fish in any pond."

"Yes," said Bibb, "that's always my way. All places are alike to me."

"What! and you went right in among them? Oh, the bishop will die when he hears this."

"Tell him then without delay," said Bibb; "if you think there is any chance of your getting the see."

"It is wonderful," said the parson, addressing the women gravely. "This is the way these men have such success. Catch one of our prim snug fellows lighting on an idea like that! Tidymen, who measures every step he takes with a foot-rule, would call for hartshorn if such a thing were told him."

"Did you really," said his wife, "go into that wicked place, among all those awful, painted people? It was bold, certainly."

"Not only that, ma'am, but I painted myself to be in harmony. I went into the thing con amore."

"That he did," I struck in, finding ourselves on common ground, "and you should have seen him dancing."

"Oh, come, you didn't do that," said the clergyman, at last shocked. "Our friend is varnishing a bit. That would be verging on the indecorous."

"No," said Bibb, "all things as I am to most people, I didn't go so far as that. A sacrilegious group of dancers got round me and tried to mob me; but I was too much for them, and gave them the tibia right and left."

We now rose from table.

"I am not going to let you go," said the parson, "for to-day at least. The secret has oozed out by this time; and if I were to let you, others wouldn't."

"Oh, I say," said Bibb, a little alarmed, "this ain't fair, you know. I must go—appointment, you know. Haven't we?"

"When? where?" I asked, innocently.

No excuse would do. The girls were pretty, as Bibb said, and the premises snug. "But we have no clothes," he added; "and we can't sit in our swallow-tails."

"You must keep it all on you, gown and everything. It is so original, quite the man, you know."

"The gown a man! why you are confusing the sexes."

"Ah, always a wag," said the clergyman, laughing. "That should have come across the cushion, eh?"

Come across a cushion? Was he a pugilist?

"Now I insist," continued the clergyman. "You must stay, and must appear as you are. There is something so exquisitely eccentric in the idea of your being my guest."

It was certainly mortifying the way he always passed me over.

He went away for a short time, leaving us with the young ladies, whom we proceeded to entertain according to our lights. Bibb was infinitely diverting. In a few minutes the parson returned, his face beaming with intelligence.

"What did I tell you?" he said. "They have laid on the dogs already. There's Mumpchin and Ruggles below. I don't speak to them. They don't touch on this to me. Yet there they are, below in my hall! Oh, the bishop will go into fits when he hears it all."

"Well, if he gets all the attacks you have prophesied for him, his life's not worth a week's purchase," said Bibb. "But who are our friends below?"

"He don't know them!" said the parson, in admiration. "No, he don't. No wonder they say you would have got your living on the stage. Won't know them, of course. Capital!"

"I tell you I don't know anything about the fellows; I can do nothing for them. Give 'em half-a-crown apiece. I won't see them."

Suddenly there was a scuffling sound in the passage. The door was gently opened, and two burly gentlemen, with rubicund faces—one with red hair—appeared.

"Walk in, gentlemen," said the parson, "walk in. I dare say you are surprised at the irony of this situation. Conjunctions as queer have happened before now. I warned my friend here, that you would not let him leave the place."

"It is, indeed, an 'onor," began Mr. Ruggles. "Most opportune: the buildin' wants enlargement sadly, and there is the heavy debt; but that 'ere voice and exertions, which has so often stirred 'arts, will not be found wanting 'ere."

"Enlarge your building?" said he. "How am I to do it? You must get a mason or a contractor for that, you know."

There was genuine laughter at this, which rather puzzled Bibb.

"We 'erd you were at Grundyborough, working for the enlargement of the iron buildin' there."

"Working at Grundyborough? Rubbish! I don't recollect doing anything in the iron line."

Again more laughter.

"I'll tell you what he did do, gentlemen," said the parson. "You'd never guess. What would you say to his bursting into that pandemonium, the fancy ball they gave there, and going last night among the mummers and masquers! Oh! you'll have him giving one of his inimitable delineations of it in his own humorous way next week up in London."

"Oh, it's like him! like him, all over!" chuckled Mr. Ruggles, with admiration. "But to business: a deputation went afore yesterday to Grundyboro', to try and make such fixture as would be convenient, but they said you were not expected till the day after to-morrow, and that an answer would be sent over. Now, if to-night would be convenient, we could get the large 'All, and have the tables set; admission, including tea and toast, at two-and-six, with a subscription arterwards. They'll come in from the outlying places in crowds, when it gets known."

"Now, you can't refuse," said the parson. "No mock modesty. And yet, only think of me pressing you! I declare I am getting curious to hear how the business would go off. You might smuggle me in over the ventilator."

"Oh! I say! look here," said Jemmy. "This is all moonshine. As for my getting money for you to enlarge a building, it's nonsense. Of course I can tumble a bit, and do some buffoonery to make 'em laugh at the mess. I have had no regular practice, you know. I am an officer in the army —"

A roar of enjoyment interrupted him, broken by, "capital!" "uncommonly good!" "so like him!" "an officer in the army!"

"I am, I tell you. Ask him. He's one too. We came out on a spree."

Again fresh enjoyment, with "so like him!" "Do you know, I really begin," said the clergyman, "to gather an idea of his manner. I can see how that sort of turn would affect a crowd. It is really very quaint in its way."

"Yes," said the visitors, "if he'll only give 'em plenty of that to-night, the half-crowns will pour in. Why, you know, sir, if you was to take the kitchen poker for

a subject, it 'ud do. A picture o' the masked ball, that would be the subject to tickle 'em. That's what would go down."

"Leave it to me," said the clergyman, whispering confidently. "You get your posters done, and I'll bring him to it."

"Oh! but, I say," said Jemmy, "I can't have this. I tell you I'm in the army—in the—th foot." But a fresh roar of laughter interrupted him, and the visitors quitted the room.

Bibb drew me into the window. "You see they've heard of J. Bibb, Esq., down here. But we must get out of this at once. They'll follow us to the station, and bring us back. Surely you know what I can do. I can sing a good comic song, or tie my head up in a towel and give the imitations for the fellows round the table. But as for coming out on a platform before a crowd, it's a different thing. I should break down. I have not had the practice."

"Oh, you'd pull through well enough. Anything goes down with the rustics."

"After all," said Jemmy, reflectively, "it is flattering to find one's little gifts so esteemed. The only thing that's queer is how one's reputation should have spread to these sort of people."

"That's just it," I said, "it's all in their line you know. They cultivate a sort of broad humour. You see this is a very pleasant home, and these are nice girls—really worth becoming acquainted with. Very snug quarters—though the parson is a bore."

"Did you ever see such a prig, with his wondering at himself every minute, for doing this and doing that?"

"And the irony as he called it, of the situation —"

"If he got a good ironing it would do him all the good in the world."

"Well," I continued, "on the whole I think, as there is this anxiety to see you—and you know, Jemmy, you can be very funny when you like—I would be inclined to be agreeable and do my best. They will have it, so it's their look-out."

"That's true," said Jemmy, who had the natural vanity of all comic performers in society.

"Let me see," I went on, "you might knock up a little programme. Begin with the 'Three Tom-tits.' Then follow with the imitation of the general of the district as General Bumbo. They'll never know it. Then the kangaroo, that will make 'em roar. And the stump oration. And wind up with

the topical song, bringing in the parson ; and any local jokes you may pick up."

Jemmy's eyes began to glisten with anticipation.

" I declare we might have a very funny night ! I shouldn't care if I went in for it." And he began to rehearse.

Three Tom-tits,
Sitting on a tree ;
Red, black, and white,
And they all went twee-twee-twee.

We joined in the well-known chorus, to the accompanying hopping dance.

Twee-twee-twee !
Fiddle-de-dee, &c.

As we were thus rather uproariously engaged, to us entered the parson and his daughters. They were not a little astounded. But after a moment he understood it.

" There is the System for you all over ! That's what it comes to at last ! Of course you urge that human nature requires this sort of thing : that the end justifies the means, and all that. No, no, there I can't go with you. I must draw the line somewhere, Broad as I am. It's leading up to the circus."

Certainly this was the most enigmatical cleric I had ever met. As a matter of course he killed his bishop the next moment ; rather he spared him for this once. For he said he would not tell the bishop, as he would die off on the spot with laughter.

" To tell you the truth," said Jemmy, " I can't make head, tail, or middle of you. But the point is, as you and the young ladies, and the butcher-looking gentlemen that waited on us, are so bent on it, I have no objection to doing my best to entertain you, for enlarging iron or any other buildings that may require it. My friend and I will knock up a sort of little programme, and do our little all to make you laugh."

" To make us laugh," said the clergyman with his favourite manner. " There it goes again. It all comes round to that."

" Well, hang me if I know what you want," said Jemmy, testily. " You keep pressing me to do the thing, and when I agree you begin shaking your head and talking of leading up to circuses and such things. It's really not fair of you."

" Papa, papa ! you shouldn't," said Cecilia, the eldest (Bibb's one).

I have always remarked there is a sort of natural relation on these occasions, and that by a happy law even the most temporary relations of this kind are adjusted harmoniously. Emily, the other daughter

of our incomprehensible host, was drawn to me. " Indeed," she said, " it's very kind of these gentlemen."

" Well, well," said their father, " it's the oddity of the thing that keeps coming back on me ; to see myself arranging and planning with two persons of that kind"—

" We know all that," said Jemmy, impatiently. " And, I assure you, it seems more odd to me. But, now, the point is, if we are to do the thing, we had better do it well. We must get together a few traps and properties, and I and my mate here must rehearse a bit ; so that all may go smooth at night."

The clergyman did not say anything to this. He had now ceased to be astonished.

" So bustle up," continued Jemmy, now gradually working into his old spirit.

" We shall want the following articles, which I know the young ladies will help us to." They looked delighted. " And you, my good sir, be kind enough to pencil them down, so as not to forget them. I assure you, they are all-important. First, tow, for I shall want something like a wig, and it imitates it capitally ; some yards of coloured calico, for my stump oration—have you that down ?" The clergyman had suspended writing from astonishment. " Do, my dear sir, stir yourself. It's all-important ; and there's no time to lose. Some burnt cork, for blackening the face——"

" Oh, I declare," said the parson ; " this is going beyond—I can't endorse this. There's a certain length in the cause of charity, and all that : but when it comes to——"

" Surely, papa, you can leave it all to Mr. Mughouse. He will be the best judge——"

" Now, you hear that," said Bibb. " Leave it to Mughouse. Of course, he knows best."

" Yes," I said, joining in this proposal. " I vote for leaving it all to Mughouse, who, I am sure, is a sensible man."

" Oh ! And an old, broken umbrella, that you don't care about, which, when opened, is to be nearly all ribs and no cover. That's all-important in the stump speech."

" Well, well," murmured the clergyman. But he wrote it down, nevertheless.

The young ladies now putting business aside, came to entwine our limbs with garlands—figuratively, of course ; that is, to offer all their little arts of entertainment. With these they were so successful that the hours passed by most agreeably. I was looking out of the window,

somewhat fatigued by these attentions, when I noticed a placard that had been, inappropriately enough, attached to a huge tree that was in the centre of the grass. I could make out the letters, for they were very large:—

THIS EVENING

W. MUGHOUSE,
OF LONDON,

WILL DELIVER AN ADDRESS
DESCRIPTIVE OF WHAT HE HAS SEEN AND
HEARD AT GRUNDYBORO'.

"Look here," I said, "they have got the gentleman you mentioned awhile ago to give a comic description of the ball. The wind's taken out of your sails, Bibb, my boy."

"Oh, he will do it beautifully," said one of the young ladies, rapturously.

"Who?" I asked.

"Mr. Mughouse."

"That's what I say," I answered; "another showman! Mughouse by name." This innocent remark of mine, for some reason that I could not divine, convulsed the ladies.

The clergyman presently came in, and with a sly look pointed to the tree, with a "Did you notice?" On which our friend Bibb made a reply of the same character—

"You see these fellows knew better, after all. They had their Mughouse to fall back upon." He felt rather jealous of Mughouse, he said, and would like to hear how Mughouse got through the work. At which speeches the parson was convulsed, and declared again that "the whole would certainly kill the bishop."

Under these circumstances, it may be imagined the dinner was most enjoyable. I was amazed at the spirits of our friend Jemmy. He told stories, gave imitations, and kept all in a roar. The clergyman laughed obstreperously.

"When I think," he said, "how I have spoken against this sort of thing—lifted my voice against you, individually—"

"You have?" said Jemmy. "Well, I don't call that brotherly."

"I own it, because I think your system is, to a certain extent, demoralising. You think the comic element is necessary, just as one gives jam to children to get them to take a powder. Now, my dear Mr. Mughouse——"

"Now, look here," said Bibb, "don't call me that. You have done so once or twice; I suppose, from seeing it on the placard. But I don't answer to that name. It's too ugly. I prefer Bibb."

How they did laugh. "It would kill the bish—" the clergyman was going to say, but checked himself. I think he saw that Bibb was inclined to make a study of him for public representation. Still, what did he mean by his protestations of the oddity of his situation? "Here am I, as Broad as can be, &c." And what was more odd, his family seemed to accept that view of his being "as Broad as can be," as a very natural statement.

At last the time drew near. Bibb and I had arranged the little programme, and just before setting out for the rooms, we were told that Messrs. Ruggles and friend wished to see him.

"We have a surprise for you, sir," said Ruggles, "a most un'oped for one, indeed. Our brother Copperer, of the northern circuit, will be here and jine. He once worked with you."

"Don't know him—or at least don't remember the man. What can he do, though?"

"He will open, sir. He is longing to see you, sir. He says it is ten years since, and he is yearning to see you."

"What can he do? I say. Can he sing a comic song?"

"Ah, Mr. Mughouse! you will be funny."

"Now don't Mughouse me, please. That's the shop, over the way—on the tree. No connection with any other concern. You understand. Tell your friend I don't want him. Let him give an entertainment for himself."

"But it's the rule, my dear sir. The people will expect it. As senior he always opens."

"Let him open or shut, as he likes. Shut him up, and you just bundle off at once." And Jemmy very cavalierly turned our visitors out.

I hurried over to the assembly room, school-house, or whatever the place originally was. The parson and his family had gone on before, the former really determined to attend incog., and protesting, for the very last time, that when the circumstance of his surreptitious visit came to be made known to the bishop, the consequence which he had now made rather hackneyed would follow. I could see there was a vast crowd assembled, chiefly of stout women, and well-fed coarse-looking men. Oddly enough, I saw none of our bills, though the walls were profusely covered with the announcements of the rival performer, Mughouse. I made my way

to the private or green room, as we called it. I found it filled with a number of broad-shouldered men, in white neckcloths and tail coats, and some of their attendant women. This I knew would "put out" Jemmy. Mr. Ruggles came up to me confidentially, "I want to speak to you," he said.

"Now look here," I answered, "you must really clear the place of these people. He won't stand it. We can't have any one behind the scenes."

"Behind the scenes!"

"Yes, tell them so. Get them out. I assure you he'll cut up restive."

"My dear sir, what is this tone? We are not accustomed to it. They are very independent down here. These are the committee men, and committee women. They have seats on the platform."

"He won't have that at all. I give you fair notice," I answered, angrily; "there'll be a row, I warn you. Look here, gentlemen and ladies, I must clear the course; my friend is imperative on this point. He must have the place to himself. He'll want all the room he can get for the songs and dances—so—"

At this moment the door flew open, and Jemmy Bibb himself entered, with the tow wig, the points of his gills reaching to his forehead, the dilapidated umbrella under his arm, the tails of his coat down to his heels, in short, arrayed after the pattern of the diverting Unsworth, as he used to appear when about to deliver a stump oration!

How describe the effect—the fatal éclaircissement that followed—the deep groan, half sorrowful, half indignant, that burst from the pious breasts of the would-be hearers of the Reverend Mughouse! There was no need for explanations, the bizarre dress told the tale. The humourist was nearly offered a sacrifice among the worshippers—the most furions being brother Coppering, who, elevating a bulky umbrella, denounced him solemnly before the crowd. The most diverting part of the whole business was the bearing of Jemmy Bibb, who conceived that this was some organized interference with his entertainment, on the part of the serious people of the place. We had literally to fly from the building, and found refuge at the parsonage, where, I am bound to say, we were received with sympathy, and where we laughed until midnight over the adventure. The girls were really full of fun, and I think liked

us better in our revealed than in our supposed characters. We listened indulgently when their father for the hundredth time said that the bishop would really die of laughter, when he came to hear it, for there were now some intelligible grounds for his so doing.

For long after Jemmy Bibb used to be regularly called on at the mess dinners to tell the story "about being taken for that dissenting fellow," and now tells it with so many embellishments and variations that the original facts are in danger of being lost. To preserve them from that fate I have committed them to print.

PARTING.

We have had many partings. In the gloom
Of wintry twilights, moaning winds have whirled
Our farewell words afar. A quiet room
Has kept us safe a moment from the world
For fond last words and clinging kisses sweet.
The lark has seen us in a dewy lane
Unclasping hands; in many a busy street;
Beside an angry sea in blinding rain;
Upon a breezy moor at early morn,
Before the butterflies were flown abroad;
Among the standing shocks of yellow corn;
Upon a churchyard's green and hallowed sod;
Have farewell words been spoken, while the smart
Of parting pangs drew closer heart to heart.
Brave for each other's sake, our partings wear
An aspect almost cheerful, eye meets eye,
As hand holds hand; love gives us strength to bear
Our silent anguish as the moments fly.
We have had many partings, but we know
More solemn farewell doth before us lie,
When death warns one of us to rise and go.
But which shall be the traveller, thou or I?
Shall I stand by to watch thy life's eclipse,
To mark the pang that sets thy spirit free?
Will the dark waters gather to my lips,
Or shall I watch them closing over thee?
It matters little; love is very strong,
That parting is our last, and is not long.

LEGENDS AND TRADITIONS OF ENGLISH COUNTIES.

THE ISLE OF WIGHT. CHARLES THE FIRST, AND HIS TWO ATTEMPTS TO ESCAPE FROM CARISBROOKE CASTLE.

On the 4th of June, 1647, when Cornet Joyce (an ex-tailor and a trusty trooper in Whalley's regiment), led off Charles in the midst of his seven hundred horsemen from the gate of Holmby Castle in Northamptonshire, he carried his dignified but promise-breaking captive straight to Newmarket. Thence the king was shifted to Royston, and from Royston to Hatfield. From Hatfield he went to Woburn Abbey, from Woburn to Windsor, and from Windsor Castle to Hampton Court.

At six p.m. on the evening of Thursday, 11th of November, the slippery king, attended by three faithful gentlemen—

Legge, Ashburnham, and Berkeley, fled from Hampton Court and made for Hampshire. On Mondays and Thursdays, when Charles wrote his foreign letters, he seldom came out of his bedchamber till between five and six p.m. He soon after went to prayers, and, about half an hour after that, to supper. At that hour on this particular day the usual guards were placed about his bedchamber. The king retired soon after supper. Suspicion was at last aroused by his long stay, and still more by the crying of a favourite "black grey" greyhound. The captive, alarmed by the threats of the Levellers, had slipped away through Paradise (a part of the garden so called) about twilight.

The king had left in the gallery his long cloak and some letters in his own handwriting were found on the table in the withdrawing room. In one of these letters, addressed to the Parliament, the faithless king said that he had long endured restraint, hoping it might lead to peace, but, finding the contrary, he had withdrawn himself. He still wished for peace, and to prevent the effusion of more blood, and that if he could be heard with honour, freedom, and safety, he would instantly break through his cloud of retirement, and show himself ready to be *Pater Patriæ*. — CHARLES REX.

The night of his escape Charles stole out of the vaulted passage, where there were no guards set, slipped into the deer park, then crossed the Thames in a boat that was waiting for him. He landed at Ditton, and then pushed on for Hampshire and the coast. It will never now be known what drove the feeble and irresolute king to this purposeless flight. Some Cavalier writers of the time affirmed that a ship had been hired to convey the king to France, and that it was Ashburnham's preconceived intention that he should seek refuge with Colonel Hammond, the governor of Carisbrooke Castle in the Isle of Wight. The king himself had at one time resolved to throw himself on the mercy of the City of London; at another time Jersey had been talked of as an asylum. Certain it is, however, that Ashburnham and others of his attendants had alarmed the king by warning him of pretended plots of the fanatical Levellers to assassinate "the dog" as they called him; and some writers, including Clarendon, seem to think that Cromwell and Ireton had probably for their own purpose

filled Ashburnham's timid mind with exaggerated fears on this point.

But to return to the flight. Twenty miles from the Hampshire coast the king ordered Mr. Ashburnham and Sir John Berkeley to cross to the Isle of Wight and ascertain how the governor would receive him. Hammond had been several times at court, and was half suspected by his own party of Cavalier tendencies, although he had married a daughter of Hampden, at Cromwell's special wish and by his express advice. There were few Parliamentary troopers in the island, and the foolish king seems to have resolved to throw himself on the honour and generosity of this young Cromwellian colonel. All he had to go upon was that Ashburnham had once met Hammond on the road to Kingston-on-Thames, and gathered from a few stray words that he was not averse to the king; moreover, Denham, the poet, and Lady Isabella Thynne had warmly commended him. For this perilous journey Ashburnham and Berkeley were by no means eager, but eventually the king, accompanied only by Mr. Legge, the trustiest and wisest of the three, rode on to Tichfield House, the residence of the Earl of Southampton, where, in the absence of her son, the old countess entertained Charles till his envoy's return across the rough Solent.

The king had sent, by Ashburnham and Berkeley, to explain the cause of his flight to Colonel Hammond, a letter written to him at Hampton Court by Cromwell, warning him of the Levellers' plots, and telling him a dangerous guard of that party was the next day to arrive at Hampton. He forwarded also an anonymous letter which stated that Hugh Peters and another of the army preachers had called him Ahab, and had said to the soldiers, "this majesty of yours is but a dead dog." The king's own letter expressed confidence in Hammond as a person of good extraction, who, though he had declared against him, had spoken in terms of respect of his person. He had sent, the king went on to say, so as not to surprise him, and requested a promise of protection to himself and his servants; and if Colonel Hammond could not, or was unwilling to forward his desires, that he should suffer the messenger to depart free and unmolested. Berkeley, an ambitious and vain man, but not fond of such trips to a lion's den, told the king at parting that he knew nothing of Hammond, who might detain them in the island, and, therefore, should

they not return next day, he begged the king to disregard their safety and secure his own escape.

On reaching Lymington, the Solent proved too rough to allow them to cross till the morning, when the two very simple gentlemen made their way straight to Carisbrooke, arriving there about half-past ten a.m. Learning that Colonel Hammond had gone to Newport, to meet some officers of the island, they followed and soon overtook him. Then Berkeley, the more self-confident of the two, at once blurted out, in the silliest way, their object, telling the Puritan colonel, that fearing assassination, the king had left Hampton Court and was then at Tichfield. Poor young colonel, he was much in the position of a blushing young debutante, who, while trying vainly to stow herself away in the corner of a ball room, suddenly finds herself asked to dance by the most tremendous beau of the whole evening! Hammond did not know what course to take; but feeling, as he said, the great importance that the person of the king was at that juncture of affairs to the peace of the kingdom, he thought it his duty to the king, the Parliament, and the kingdom to preserve the king's person from such horrid attempts and bring him to a place of safety where he might agree to such things as would end the great divisions then abounding.

Ashburnham and Berkeley now began slowly to see what fools they had been; but ultimately the latter chivalrously agreed to remain at the castle as hostage, while the more timid Ashburnham took horse and returned to the king with Hammond's somewhat vague promise to "not deceive his majesty's expectations." Berkeley confesses, in his own account of the affair, that, as he went over the drawbridge into the castle, he saw the clearest possible shadow of a gallows start up before him. Ashburnham, uncommonly glad to get off, soon took horse, but he had hardly started when the governor at the castle gate called him back and had a quarter of an hour's conference, during which, as Berkeley declares he afterwards learned in Holland, the governor offered to let Ashburnham stay and Berkeley go, but Ashburnham positively refused.

"Before I could make any reply," says Sir John Berkeley, in his defence of himself, "Mr. Ashburnham made this reply, 'I will ask no more.' The governor added, 'Let us then all go to the king and

acquaint him with it.' Mr. Ashburnham answered, 'With all my heart.' I then broke from the governor, who held me in his hand, and went to Mr. Ashburnham and said, 'What do you mean to carry this man to the king, before you know whether his majesty will approve of this undertaking, or no? Undoubtedly you will surprise him.' Mr. Ashburnham said nothing, but 'I'll warrant you.' 'And so you shall,' said I; 'for you know the king much better than I do; and, therefore, when we shall come where the king is, I assure you, I will not see him before you have satisfied his majesty concerning your proceeding.'

This fatal step of Ashburnham's in disclosing the king's hiding place to the Puritan governor, evidently arose more from Ashburnham's desire that he should not be kept as hostage at Carisbrooke, under the very shadow of the gallows, at the very thought of which all his loyalty and general courage melted away. The governor, Ashburnham, and Berkeley, then rode to Cowes, where Hammond was, in spite of their remonstrances, joined by Captain Baskett, Governor of Cowes Castle, and two servants. The six men then crossed the channel to Tichfield, when Ashburnham went up-stairs alone to the king, and announced the arrival of Hammond. The king, striking himself on his breast, exclaimed, "What have you brought Hammond with you? Oh, Jack, you have undone me; for I am by this means made fast from stirring." To which Mr. Ashburnham replied, "that if he mistrusted Hammond, he would undertake to remove him;" a proposition the king hesitatingly rejected by saying, "I understand you well enough; but the world would not excuse me. For if I should follow that counsel, it would be said and believed that he (Hammond) had ventured his life for me, and that I had unworthily taken it from him. No, it is now too late to think of anything but going through the way you have forced upon me, and to leave the issue with God."

But the irresolute king had not much time to discuss the assassination of Hammond, as proposed by Ashburnham, for within half an hour the two Puritans grew impatient, and sent up one of Lord Southampton's servants to remind the king that they were in attendance. Ushered up, they kissed the king's hand. The king then pleaded his danger from the Levellers, and his wish for a place of refuge where he might deliberate.

It is almost certain that the king's resolve to make the Isle of Wight a place of refuge had been the suggestion of Ashburnham. Once there, Charles could, he had thought, hire a small vessel at Southampton and sail straight to France. All depended now on Hammond, who merely said that he tended his majesty's person above his own life, and that he would fulfil his desires, saving the orders he should receive from the Parliament. If Charles did not at once raise his hand as a signal for Ashburnham to draw and stab Hammond, there was no escape now.

That same evening, Charles, attended by Hammond, Baskett, and his three rash friends, left Tichfield House for Cowes, where they spent the night in an ale-house, near the castle, and the next morning the irresolute king (not too noble, but too vacillating to counsel an assassination), was conducted to Carisbrooke Castle. A poor product of Divine right was King Charles, yet the people's loyalty was touching. As he passed through Newport a gentlewoman knelt and presented him with the last damask rose from her garden and prayed for him, which, says Herbert in his Memoirs, "His majesty heartily thanked her for."

The Carisbrooke Castle Charles entered looked then much as it does now, crowning the hill above the sea, and parted off by a narrow valley from the pretty village and its Norman church. The castle that King Stephen besieged is there still, with its Elizabethan entrance archway, and that turreted gateway that Lord Scales, the Yorkist lord of the island, erected in the reign of Edward IV. The bastions that Gianbella, the Italian engineer, built for Elizabeth, and the part built by Montacute Earl of Salisbury, in the reign of Richard I., where he was now to lodge, must have been familiar to Charles, for when a bright boy of nine years old he and his royal father, King James, had dined here after hunting in Parkhurst Forest.

Hammond's first step was to write to his staunch friend Cromwell, and after that to the Parliament. He said he had found the king near the water-side, and, unable to secure him there, had brought him over to the island. Hammond had made up his mind now, and had forgotten that he was nephew of the king's chaplain. Nor was Parliament less firm; the flight of Charles had confirmed their belief in his utter insincerity. The fugitive bird had foolishly flown into a cage, and there he

must remain. They at once forbade any stranger who had been in arms against the Parliament remaining in the island. No person who had been with Charles was to come into the king's presence, or to any castle or fort of the island. No person, indeed, was to be admitted to the king's presence without an express Parliamentary warrant. Still all went well for the king at first. The garrison at Carisbrooke consisted of only twelve old men of the Earl of Portland's regiment, and there seemed no reason why the king should not leave the island whenever a vessel could be found ready to sail for France.

But, poor weak man, he deceived himself; the cat had only let him go within the reach of her fell paw. One by one the doors of escape closed silently, but for ever. Hammond, without any outward sign of restraint, issued a significant order, that no Hampshire or Isle of Wight vessel should land persons or goods anywhere but at Yarmouth Castle, Cowes Castle, and Ryde, where guards were posted to examine and detain all who could not give a very good account of themselves.

Nevertheless all went agreeably for the royal visitor to Carisbrooke. Hammond took the king out to hunt in Parkhurst forest, where deer were then plentiful, and being a bachelor, and no great manager of a household, sent for his mother from Chertsey to superintend his domestic arrangements. Moreover, on November 24, the seals were taken off the king's furniture at Hampton Court, and it was forwarded for his royal use. The Cavalier gentry of the island were allowed freely to visit the court, and the king went to dine with Sir John Oglander at Nunwell. Gentlemen were admitted to kiss his hand, country people came daily to the bowling green of the castle to be touched for the evil, and the inhabitants of Newport promised to preserve him, and defend him from all dangers that might arise. But the chain soon tightened. Presently came an order to Hammond to send up to London Ashburnham, Berkeley, and Legge, to be examined as to the king's flight; indeed it was only by Hammond's strong intercession that the king was not left without an attendant. On the 24th of December the commissioners from both Houses of Parliament arrived, to induce the king to make concessions; and on a doubtful reply of his, the Parliament, urged by Cromwell and Ireton, refused to receive any more letters or messages from him.

In January, 1648, Cromwell wrote to Hammond an encouraging letter, which soon had its results. The king was carefully locked up every night, and the keys were taken to the governor. The castle had rapidly turned into a prison. Berkeley, sent to Cromwell with letters from Charles, was coldly received, Cromwell saying he was willing to serve his majesty as long as he could, but not to his own ruin. Berkeley, he said, should not expect that he (Cromwell) would peril his life for the king's sake. Berkeley returned post haste to Carisbrooke, to urge Charles to immediate flight, but the king still wavered. The preparations for his escape were soon discovered by Hammond at Newport, and on his return to Carisbrooke he closed the gates of the castle, dismissed the king's chaplain, even his (Hammond's) own kinsman, and ordered the instant departure of Ashburnham, Berkeley, and Legge. The next day, when the king rose from his dinner, the three gentlemen came together and prostrated themselves at his majesty's feet, prayed God for his preservation, and kissing his hand, departed. The following painfully dramatic conversation then ensued between Charles and the governor of Carisbrooke :

The King. "Why do you use me thus? Where are your orders for it? Was it the spirit that moved you to it?"

Hammond remained silent. His orders were as yet secret. At length, however, he laid the change of his proceedings to the king's unsatisfactory answer to the commissioners.

The King. "Did you not engage your honour you would take no advantage from them against me?"

The king had returned his answer to the commissioners sealed, but they had insisted that it should be delivered to them open, on which Charles required their promise, that after reading his answer, it should not make any alteration in his present state. The governor had been present with the commissioners, and was therefore included with the party.

Hammond. "I said nothing."

The King. "You are an equivocating gentleman. Will you allow me my chaplain? You pretend for liberty of conscience, shall I have none?"

Hammond. "I cannot allow you any chaplain."

The King. "You use me neither like a gentleman nor a Christian."

Hammond. "I'll speak with you when you are in better temper."

The King. "I have slept well to-night."

Hammond. "I have used you very civilly."

The King. "Why do you not so now then?"

Hammond. "Sir, you are too high."

The King. "My shoemaker's fault, then. My shoes are of the same last, &c. [Twice or thrice repeated.] Shall I have liberty to go about and take the air?"

Hammond. "No, I cannot grant it."

The king then charged him with his allegiance, and told him that he must answer this. Hammond wept, but made no concessions. Charles was at the very time meditating another flight.

A mad attempt of Burley, an old sea captain, to rouse the inhabitants of Newport to rescue King Charles, led to increased restraints on the king. The island was filled with troops, and the forts were garrisoned. Only thirty servants were allowed in the castle, and four gentlemen were chosen to watch, two and two, at the king's chamber door by day and night. The four were Mr. Thomas Herbert, Mr. Mildmay, Mr. Preston, and that staunch and desperate adherent, Captain Silas Titus, afterwards author of "Killing no Murder." Osburn and Firebrace, two other gentlemen, were much employed in passing or taking letters every week to the queen, the prince, and many of the Cavalier noblemen. Of these loyal men, Firebrace was the most active and the most ingenious. He left letters for the king in a private place in his bedchamber, and went there every morning for the answers. Osburn (who pretended to Hammond that he was a spy) as gentleman usher had to hold the king's glove at dinner, and in the fingers of the glove he used to slip small notes. Firebrace, while watching the backstair door, used to talk to the king after supper through a chink in the wainscot behind the hangings.

The habits of the royal prisoner during his year's confinement at Carisbrooke are clearly described by Herbert, and also by Rushworth. Passionately fond of exercise, during which he trotted rather than walked, Charles always began the day, if the weather was fine, by a morning's walk round the castle walls with that uncomfortable companion, Governor Hammond. This walk was usually repeated in the afternoon. As the spring advanced the king wiled away many pleasant hours at bowls on the

parade ground outside the castle walls, but within the counterscarp, where Hammond had put up a summer-house for him. At dinner time his majesty conversed with his attendants about the occurrences of the day, and after dinner retired to his chamber. The hours of devotion, of business and of writing were also carefully observed, and on Sunday the king devoted time to reading the Bible and to prayers and meditation in his closet. His prison library, according to Herbert, consisted of Bishop Andrews's Sermons, Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, Dr. Hammond's Works, Laud's Paraphrase on the Psalms, Barclay's Argenis, George Herbert's Poems, Fairfax's Tasso, Harrington's Ariosto, Spenser's Faery Queen, "and the like," for elevating his spirits after serious studies. There is no mention in this brief catalogue of Shakspeare, though Milton taunts Charles with quoting both Shakspeare's plays and Sydney's Arcadia in the prayers, &c., he left, or was said to have left, in MS. The following is the commencement of some verses, supposed by Bishop Burnet to have been written by Charles at Carisbrooke :

MAJESTY IN MISERY ; OR AN IMPLORATION TO THE
KING OF KINGS.

Great Monarch of the world, from whose power springs
The potency and power of kings,
Record the royal woe my suffering sings;
And teach my tongue, that ever did confine
Its faculties in truth's serpentine line
To track the treasons of thy foes and mine.
Nature and law, by thy divine decree
(The only root of righteous royalty)
With this dim diadem invested me;
With it the sacred sceptre, purple robe,
The holy unction and the royal globe;
Yet I am levell'd with the life of Job.

There is a tradition, which however Lord Clarendon thought improbable, that at times Hammond resorted to such offensive measures as to lead to blows between him and the king. The story, which seems to us quite trustworthy, runs thus :—

Hammond came in to the king suddenly at two o'clock in the night, and the king, suspecting some treachery, from his coming at that unseasonable hour, slipped on his clothes. Hammond went readily to his cabinet and searched it, but found not such papers as he looked for, he then endeavoured to search the king's pocket; but his majesty resisted, and gave him a box on the ear; and it is said he struck the king again. Upon this violence offered, the king took the papers out of his pocket

and thrust them into the fire, upon which Hammond attempted to pull them out again; but the king so well guarded them that they were all burned, though in this scuffle the king got a hurt on his face by a knock against the edge of the table.

One thousand pounds were now spent in strengthening the castle. The king's trustiest adherents were banished the island at once. Titus, Firebrace, and other brave and dogged friends poured in, however, letters in cypher and news of all kinds. Fifteen of the secret letters written by Colonel Titus to the king at this critical time are still preserved in the British Museum. The king on the scaffold especially commanded Titus to his son. It was Titus who moved in Parliament for that last and shameful insult to the bodies of Cromwell, Ireton, and Bradshaw. A thorough-going Royalist indeed was Titus, true as steel, and as keen and cruel.

With his usual cunning, the king at this time assumed a special air of cheerfulness, in order to disguise the fast ripening designs for his escape. In one of his notes to Firebrace he writes—"I hope this day at dinner you understood my looks, for the soldier I told you of, whose looks I like, was then there in a white nightcap; and as I thought you took notice, I hope to find something from you when I come in from walking."

The king's imprisonment had, there can be no doubt, deeply moved the Cavaliers of the Isle of Wight and Hampshire, and Titus had already secured many trusty associates. Mr. Edward Worsley (of an old island family), and Mr. John Newland, one of the corporation of Newport, had offered their assistance, and two men within the castle, Burroughs and Cresset, had made a similar proffer.

The plan of escape for the night of the 20th of March, 1648, was now definitely arranged. Firebrace had suggested that the king should squeeze himself through the bars of his bedchamber window. The king had tried his royal head between the bars and was sure that his body could follow. Firebrace, however, had serious doubts, and proposed to make sure by cutting "the plate on which the casement shut :" but Charles would not have this done for fear of a discovery. Newland and Worsley were to be below, ready to help, together with Osburn, a gentleman sent by the Parliament to attend the King, but already brought over. When Firebrace threw up something at the window,

Charles was to let himself down by a silk cord. The fugitive king once down, Firebrace was to conduct him across the court (the sentinel being drawn, off by wine) to the great wall of the castle, where he was to be let down by a long and strong cord with a cross stick for a seat. The counterscarp beyond was low and easy for descent, and beyond that, and free of the castle, Mr. Worsley and Mr. Osburn were to be ready on horseback, with a good horse, saddle, boots, and pistols for the king. At the sea-side, in a snug place, Mr. John Newland was to be waiting with a trusty boat ready to carry Charles whither he thought fit. Firebrace had before been shown and had approved the suitable places to descend the castle wall and counterscarp.

The night, the longed-for night came, and the king's heart and the hearts of Messrs. Firebrace, Worsley, Osburn and Newland, each at their several stations, beat faster and faster as the castle clock struck the destined hour. But fortune, alas, was not Cavalier. The earth was thrown at the window, and the peaked beard came forth; but the king's breast and shoulders stuck hopelessly. Firebrace below heard Charles groan, and to his infinite agony could not go up to help him. A moment after, Charles, getting back to the room safely, by a cord he luckily at the last moment had tied to an inner window bar, lost all courage, and set a lighted candle in the window as a signal the scheme had failed. Firebrace then anxious for his fellow conspirators below, scared them off by flinging stones from the walls.

"The narrowness of the window," writes the king to Titus, "was the only impediment of my escape, and, therefore, some instrument must be had to remove that bar, which, I believe, is not hard to get; for I have seen many so portable that a man might put them in his pocket. I think it is called the endless screw, or 'the great force.' I have now made a perfect trial, and find it impossible to be done, for my body is much too thick for the breadth of the window, so that unless the middle bar be taken away I cannot get through."

Artful, however, as Charles and his friends were, Cromwell was more artful: he soon let Hammond know of the attempted escape; and Firebrace, Titus, Burroughs, and Cresset were incontinently turned out of the castle, having in vain planned to fire it, by lighting a great

heap of charcoal near the king's lodging, so that in the tumult he might escape.

The king's lodging, from his first arrival until May, had been in the Salisbury Tower, in the centre and loftiest portion of the governor's residence. He had three rooms—a presence chamber, a retiring apartment on the first floor, and, above, the room where his tailor and a Scotchman had proposed to cut the roof and drag him through. King Charles was now removed by cautious Hammond to a suite of rooms appended to the quarters of the chief officer, a series of Elizabethan gable-ended buildings on the left side of the first court after passing the great gateway, and directly opposite the chapel—a place that seemed peculiarly isolated and safe. The rooms above the old Roman ballium and fosse were on the upper floor, and consisted of a presence and bed-chamber, connected by a passage with a staircase which sloped from the chief door of the presence chamber to the court-yard, through the dwelling of the chief officer. Though this part of Carisbrooke Castle is now in ruins, the window planned for the escape, though now blocked up, can still be seen conspicuously, as it nearly adjoins the only buttress on that side the castle. The window contained two bars of iron between the stone mullions, and beneath the bedroom Hammond had a platform thrown up, where a sentinel was stationed and a cannon placed. The king's rooms were handsomely furnished with the crimson damask curtains, velvet-covered chairs, and Turkey carpets from Hampton Court.

For the second escape the indefatigable Titus had procured fresh tools. Sir John Bowring, a Cavalier, had got over Mr. Lisle (a regicide, afterwards assassinated in Switzerland). A Mrs. Whorwood, devoted to the king, had sent to London to induce William Lilly, the rascally lying astrologer, to send the king a saw, made by a locksmith in Bow-lane, to cut iron bars, a supply of aquafortis, and a hacker, to turn two of the king's knives into saws. Again, Titus, Firebrace, and Whorwood, in London; and Worsley, Newland, Osburn, and Dowsett, in the Isle of Wight, arranged the whole plan with mathematical certainty, utterly unconscious that Cromwell knew every step that was being taken.

Even at the latter end of April the Derby House Committee had got hold of the king's cypher and the whole plan of the projected escape. They knew that a ship

would be waiting at Queenborough, to carry the king to Holland; they knew that four horses would be waiting for Charles at Portsmouth: they knew the name of the king's intended guide at Arundel; they knew too of another plot, with a ladder and horses, to carry him off over the wall of the bowling-alley; and a third plot of Titus and Firebrace to bribe a man, who used to carry coals up the back-stairs to the king's chamber, to change dress with the king while the guards were at supper.

The day and hour for the second attempt came at last.

On Sunday night, the 28th of May, the king betook himself earlier than usual to his chamber, having already cut through the window-bar with Lilly's saws and aqua-fortis, and prepared to pass through; but again his old timidity and vacillation frustrated him. Looking out stealthily, he missed the friends who had appointed to be there, and, seeing more persons waiting below than were expected, he grew suspicious that the plan was discovered, closed the casement, and went to bed, never more to be a free man. Hammond soon discovered all: he had been told the story by three soldiers, who were on duty at the time under the king's window, and who had been suborned. Dowsett and a soldier, the chief plotters, were at once laid by the heels. Osburn and Worsley, being sent for, flew to the boat, turned their horses loose, were fired on by some musketeers, but got off and escaped by sea. John Newland, who managed the boat, was soon apprehended. It is said that Major Ralph, who had expressed a wish to kill the king, was waiting under the king's window to shoot him if he had descended. There is, also, an old tradition in the island that the king's escape was prevented by a sentinel who saw him getting out, and who discharged his piece and awoke the watch. It is added that this same sentinel was afterwards shot (perhaps assassinated) near Newport.

There was no hope left now. In November of the same year the king was seized by the army and taken to Hurst Castle. On January 30, 1649, King Charles stepped out of a hole broken in the wall of the Banqueting-room, and paid the final penalty of a long career of vacillation and faithlessness.

One or two more stories of Charles in the Isle of Wight, and we have done.

Howe, the master-gunner at Caris-

brooke, was a secret Royalist. When Charles I. was ordered to Newport to attend the treaty, Charles knew they never would let him return to the castle, and wished to reward Howe. The king was walking one day, just before the treaty, in the bowling green, and found the gunner's little boy, then eight or nine years old, marching up and down with a wooden sword, as boys will. The king said to him, "What are you going to do with that terrible weapon?" The boy answered, "Please your majesty, I am going to defend you with it from all your enemies." The king patted the child on the head, gave him his blessing, and said, "Well, my little friend, I am just going away from here, and I do not expect I shall ever return," and so saying put up his hand and unfastened a gold ring adorned with a large ruby, which held his neck-handkerchief in front, and added, "I should like to give you something in order that you may always remember me." He then gave him this ornament. Upon old Howe's death his son kept it till his own death, and left it to his wife. It was ordered by will that this relic should descend from age to age into the hands of the eldest female of the family, from mother to daughter, and so on. The ruby is of large size and the ring of solid gold, and in itself of considerable value. In the Gentleman's Magazine for January, 1848, is some account and a sketch of the head of King Charles the First's cane, given to this little boy about the same time.

It is also recorded that Mr. Worsley, of Gatcombe, received his majesty's watch (still preserved in the family), as a gift, the morning he was leaving the island; but this supposition must be erroneous, as Mr. Worsley was, at that time, not only proscribed from the precincts, but the removal of the king was so secret that none were aware of the procedure. The probability, therefore, is, that Mr. Worsley saw him in his route from Hurst Castle to London, and then received this interesting memorial.

By the testimony of Sir Philip Warwick it would appear that even the personal attentions of Herbert were at last interdicted, as he observes—"Being in the room with the king at Newport (at the time of the treaty) he beckoned me, and showed me in the street an old, little crumpling man, and ask'd me whether I knew him. 'No, sir,' said I, 'I never

saw him before.' 'I show him you,' says he, 'because that was the best companion I had for three months together in Carisbrooke Castle, where he made my fires.'

WE THREE.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER I.

Did he ever love me? As I sit thinking of a year ago—only a year, one year ago! I ask myself that question twenty times a day, and answer it in as many different ways. What have I to do now, but to sit and think, and wonder, and regret? No; I will not regret! Come what may I shall never wish to undo what I have done; I will not. And yet if it could have been different! If it only could have been! But the chain of "ifs" would have no end were I once to begin it. If my father had never emigrated from France, to become a naturalised citizen of the United States—if my mother had not died in my infancy, and left me to grow up without a woman's influence in my life—if I had never seen George, never married him—Bah! If I had never been born!

Our few friends in Paris had always been used to say that M. le Docteur Franqueville had the Anglomanie. He was mad about those islanders, they declared, and would ruin Mademoiselle Désirée if he brought her up in outlandish English notions. But—perhaps from a spirit of opposition to what was rather thrust upon me by my father; perhaps because the real nature of me was antagonistic to the ways and thoughts of Anglo-Saxons—I did not like English notions. I had set up in my mind an ideal image of my mother (whom I did not remember), and I was sure that she would have hated the English. She was a Provençale from Arles. Arles is celebrated for the beauty of its women, and my mother was very beautiful. Her portrait hangs before me as I write, and looks at me strangely with great Southern eyes. I do not inherit her beauty, but my eyes are like those eyes in the picture. Yes; I have my mother's eyes, and they just redeem my face from absolute ugliness.

Did he ever love me? I am trying to make it all more clear and plain to myself by writing it out. Can it be that my story is real and true? Has it happened? Do those days belong to the implacable past, or shall I awake presently? I have dreamt of being in utter misery, and have felt, despite the utterness of the misery,

that I was dreaming, and have struggled to cast off the heavy, unhappy sleep. But now—no; I am not dreaming now. I am remembering.

Well! who would have thought that I should be the heroine of a tragic sorrow? I, Désirée Franqueville, with her cool judgment, her philosophic education, and her reputation of being "tant soit peu esprit fort," to talk of herself as a heroine! No one of our old Parisian acquaintance would pity me: I cannot even pity myself. There seems to be, somewhere, another self whom I pity: a different Désirée, childish, passionate, yearning for love. But that is not really I. I sit stooping over my writing-table, and hold my pen firm and steady. And when I raise my eyes to the strip of looking-glass on the opposite wall, I see there a plain, pale face, with down-drawn corners to its mouth, and eyebrows set in a frown, and dark eyes with heavy swollen lids. Yes; you I recognise, you unlovely woman. You are Désirée Lester, born Franqueville, sure enough.

How vividly I remember every incident in that day when George asked me in marriage of my father! His fair English face was glowing as if the morning sun shone on it when he came from my father's study into our little saloon, and spoke to me, and told me he loved me, and asked me to be his wife. I knew in a moment that my fate was decided. My father was content. George was in love. And I—I was not in love, but I was proud of my tall handsome suitor. I was not a very young girl. I was turned three-and-twenty, and had never had an offer of marriage. In spite of my big brown eyes, I knew that I passed for a very plain little personage amongst our narrow circle of acquaintance in Paris. And when we settled in an obscure little town in Western America, I shrank more and more from the society of strangers, who neither liked nor understood me. I was not considered interesting or attractive in any way; and I knew it well. On my side, I repaid indifference with disdain. What were these rough people, with their thin, cheap, varnish of civilisation, to me? They could not comprehend me.

And then came this Englishman, and after only six weeks' acquaintance, told me he loved me dearly, and asked me to be his wife. It was flattering, and my self-esteem was gratified. But I was not in love. "In love!" I hated the phrase. It was a bit of English sentimentality

which disgusted me. Perhaps, even then, my old hatred of his nation hardened me a little against George. Yet I never thought of refusing his hand. It was for my father to decide whom I should marry. I would do my duty. And I was not ungrateful; no, no, I was not ungrateful. In return for George's love and protection, I would do my duty. I thought then that one could pay love with duty.

My father's pleased smile when he took my face between his hands, and kissed my forehead that night, told me he was entirely content. I was affianced. He had secured a good parti for his dowerless Désirée.

"My little girl will be safe and happy with a kind protector when I am gone," said my father, kissing me once more. His caresses were not frequent, and they meant a great deal.

"And you, mon père?"

"Oh I," said my father lightly, "I shall do very well. I have my books, and the hospital, and old Julie to make my soup. What can the heart of man desire more? And then those new experiments I am about to begin in medical electricity—there is de quo vivre for a long time, Désirée!"

I did not answer him playfully. "Suppose," I said, "that I refuse to marry George Lester, because I am not in love with him!"

My father's face changed in a moment. "Désirée!" he exclaimed.

I went on: "Your favourite English girls, those models of virtue, are expected to have a grand passion for the man they marry; is it not so? Marriage without love is a crime! I have it all by heart, you see. I have read their story-books understandingly. What if I should say to you, 'Father, I do not love this man. I cannot marry him. I dare not be false to my own heart'—and so forth! You know the kind of speech?"

My father was thoroughly startled. He looked at me in a strange way that had something of pity in it. "My daughter," he said, "I did not know this strain of feeling in you."

"No, mon père. Your business has been with my intellect, not with my feelings. You have at least trained me to use my common sense. You may thank Fate, perhaps, that I am a French woman, after all. For I shall obey you, and marry the man you present to me, and be quite satisfied that I fulfil my duty as a daughter, without any absurd romantic aspirations after a stage-player's passion."

"Désirée," said my father, turning

suddenly, after having sat silent with averted face for a long time, "Do you love some one else? I can think of nobody. But if—"

I interrupted him. I was indignant to the core, but I answered in a cold, steady voice, "No, father. I have been without a woman's care all these years, and you have openly despised the 'conventionality' of my countrywomen; but I have remembered that I was my mother's daughter, as well as yours, and I have respected myself."

When I lay down to rest that night, I was contented with myself. I was composed and calm. I had on my finger the little engagement ring which George had placed there, and I went to bed without removing it. But very soon the unaccustomed pressure annoyed me; and I took it off, and put it aside before I slept. I was no love-sick Miss.

There was no need for a long engagement. George was a civil engineer by profession. His business had brought him to the United States. But he had recently become a partner in a firm of contractors in a town in the North of England, and must return thither soon. His worldly affairs were very prosperous. Indeed, compared with the circumstances of my life hitherto, my position as George's wife would be that of a rich woman.

Within three weeks after he first asked my hand, we were married. And a month after that, we sailed away across the ocean towards my new home. My father bore the parting cheerfully. We had made him promise to pay us a visit as soon as he could get leave of absence from his hospital. George, indeed, wished to persuade him to accompany us to England, and to settle there altogether. But he would not hear of that. "Good-bye, till next year," he shouted, waving his hand from the little boat which carried him back to shore. So I left America, which had never seemed "home" to me. The only relic of my real home which I possessed was my mother's portrait. It was the only gift I asked of my father, and I carried it to Europe with me. I remember well on the journey we made together, after our arrival in England, how it pleased him to take care of me, and to use his man's strength and energy for my protection and service. He lifted me out of the railway carriage in his arms, and carried me across a wet muddy place as easily as I could have carried a doll.

"You are but a fragile bit of a thing after all, you wise, awfully wise, little woman!" he said laughing. "To think of a six-foot fellow like me, being afraid of you!"

"Afraid! You are not afraid of anything, George, I think," I answered quietly. "I believe that you would rather like to be a little afraid—a little in awe, of some one or something, for the sake of a new sensation."

"Wisdom again, my darling!" he cried. "I liked being in awe of somebody so much, that I resolved to secure you for my own, and thus enjoy the sensation for the rest of my life!"

I did not think very much of this speech then, but I thought very much and very often of it afterwards. Yes; I was a plain, unattractive little creature, not very likely to inspire love. But I passed for being a woman of sense. Poor papa was proud of the little I knew. He boasted of my reading, of my judicial mind, of my logical clearness. A young woman endowed—or supposed to be endowed—with such attributes as these, was a new phenomenon in George's experience. It had interested him.

I had a good deal to do in my home at first. I was a good housekeeper, in spite of old Julie, who would willingly have kept me a child all my life; and who had long enjoyed supremacy in the kitchen. But one day I said to her firmly, "See, Julie! mamma would not have liked her daughter to be helpless, and ignorant of household affairs. I mean to know how to prepare a pot au feu, like a good Frenchwoman." So I did not come ignorant to my new duties.

After a while the daily routine of my household was firmly established, and went on regularly. Method is the great economiser of time. I soon had abundant leisure to employ as I chose; and then I began to look at my life. Before, I had been acting more than reflecting. I began, too, to observe my husband more earnestly and critically than I had hitherto done. First of all I found strongly developed in him many characteristics of his nation. He was what they call "practical." He never theorised. He seldom worked out his motives for a course of action. He went straight to his aim, after the fashion in which, he told me, he had been used to hunt the fox. To "ride straight" was a grand thing! I often thought it a foolish method of procedure. It succeeded with George, by dint of a certain brute force, a vehement, uncalculating energy, which seemed to be intensely English. When I

sometimes spoke to him about his want of logical method, he would point triumphantly to results. I only shrugged my shoulders in silence. I had no admiration for this stupid kind of success.

George's worldly affairs prospered, nevertheless we lived quietly, and were a great deal alone. The society of the place was uncongenial to me. At first George had declared that he needed only me, and cared for no other companionship. He would come home in boyish high spirits, and overwhelm me with caresses and expressions of affection. If I spoke of his affairs, he would exclaim, "Oh, enough of business, Désirée! Let me forget that there are such things as pounds, shillings, and pence, here at least, beside my own dear little wife." I was to be a sort of toy for his hours of relaxation. I could not, however, respond to his childish gaiety. The excess of his tenderness wearied me. Then I talked of the books I had been reading, and this wearied him. At length I ceased to volunteer conversation, but sat with my embroidery or knitting in my fingers, and listened to George, and answered him as well as I could. I was doing my duty. I was determined to do my duty. And there was not in all the town a household which surpassed ours in punctuality, neatness, or the goodness of its cuisine.

Once I asked George if he did not like a certain dish I had placed before him.

"Oh yes; it is very good."

"But you are not eating: you are musing. If your dinner is not to your liking, pray tell me. I wish to satisfy your taste."

He pushed back his plate, and looked at me. "I wish," he said, "that you cared as much for satisfying my heart, as you do for satisfying my palate, Désirée!"

He had never uttered one word that bore even the most distant resemblance to a reproach until that moment. A little shock—not a pain—went through me as he spoke. Was he going to show a spark of fire?—Something different from the soft, easy, serene petting which I had experienced in our marriage thus far? As he sat there, with his hand to his knit brow, and his blue eyes fixed, with an almost fierce gaze, upon my face, I felt an impulse towards him in my heart such as he had never stirred there before. If I had arisen then, and, for all answer, clasped him in my arms! If —! Well, who knows?

I simply asked, "In what way have I omitted to consider your feelings, mon ami?"

The sparkle died out of his eyes, the flush faded from his face, and it put on the old soft look that I knew.

"No, no, Désirée ;" he said. "You have omitted nothing in the way of consideration. You are always considerate to me, I believe. And if—if you cannot be anything more than 'considerate,' that is not your fault."

"I fear I have unwittingly offended you, George. Please to point out my fault that I may amend it."

He came to me and smoothed down my hair with both his hands, and kissed my forehead, and said, "No, my darling ; I am not ungrateful. I know you are everything that is good. I musn't cry for the moon, and long for impossibilities. A heart can only give as much as it holds. You were brought up with different notions from mine, on some points. I ought to be very happy. I am happy. You know I am never good at saying clearly what I feel strongly."

So our talk ended. He was his old self again ; kind, gentle, but always seeming to make allowances for me.

Well, I admitted to myself that I was not in all ways a congenial companion for George. I wished to be impartial, and to judge coolly. My outlook upon life, my theories of existence, were all sad-coloured compared with my husband's. Theories ! He had none. But his strong health and animal spirits made a bright world of it for him. He was even a little impatient of gloomier views than his own. If he heard of sorrow or pain, his first impulse was to relieve them by doing something. He would walk twenty miles to carry a dainty to a sick person ; but he would not sit twenty minutes to listen to a tale of trouble. Yet, he was gentle. Yes ; he was ever gentle and kind. If he betrayed that a pale, sad face, or a serious discussion, irked and irritated his sanguine temperament, he betrayed it in spite of himself.

My face was pale ; my talk was serious. I could not become rosy and smiling at will. I withdrew more and more into myself, and sought in books for the mental sympathy which George could not give me. Life was a somewhat dull, monotonous business. Marriage had not brightened it for me very much. But I had never expected to bask in eternal sunshine, and had indulged in no romantic day-dreams destined to be rudely dispelled. I had my share of intelligence. I was not without resources. My hands and my head

were sufficiently, not excessively, occupied. I had abundant leisure ; more and more abundant, for George began to absent himself from his home out of business hours.

Perhaps it was not surprising that he should yield to the temptation of passing his evenings more gaily than he could pass them tête-à-tête with me. There was a society of rich merchants and men of business in the town, who met to eat and drink more than was good for them, and enjoyed themselves in an Anglo-Saxon manner. Some were older, some younger, than George ; some were married, some bachelors. He got introduced into many of their family circles—they were hospitable, these kind savages—and then some of the women began to call upon me. I, too, might have made one in their circles to eat, and drink, and chatter, and listen to hideous massacres of fine music, and stare at my neighbours' clothes. But Désirée Franqueville was not born for that. That did not enter into the duties I had assumed in marrying George. I civilly and steadily declined all invitations. I found that my unvarying politeness immensely disconcerted these people. Even their blunt familiarity was baffled by my impenetrable courtesy. By degrees they fell away, and left off inviting me.

George was annoyed at first by my persistent refusal to make acquaintances ; but he reconciled himself to it by degrees.

"Do you think these people are society for me ?" I asked him.

"Perhaps not ; yet you think them good enough for me," he answered, reddening.

"I think them ! You have shown that you like their loud jollity ; you like their feasting and card-playing. *Très bien !* I have nothing to say. Perhaps it is well that I was not an English miss, to marry with my head full of romantic, love-sick ideas, and expecting to tie my husband to my apron-string. Your physical nature is full of superabundant energy. You enjoy that which would weary and distract me. Let us look at things calmly and philosophically." So our lives drifted asunder more and more.

In the second year of our marriage my father paid us his promised visit. He was well ; he preserved his bright cheerfulness of manner ; he did not miss me too much.

"I wonder whether anyone would miss me, if I were gone," said I, quietly.

We were at dinner. My father raised his eyes quickly to George's face. George was looking at a picture on the opposite

wall-looking at it with a brooding, perplexed face and, quite evidently, not seeing it at all. Then said my father, with his old, half-mocking, half-tender smile—"The woman who can conceive and carry out such a little dinner as I am now partaking of must be missed by her husband, at all events, should Fate bereave him of her admirable talent. This little dish, aux champignons, now—I am ignorant of its technical appellation—is simply perfection. Madame Lester, je vous en fais mon compliment."

George did not smile. He did not say a word. He kept staring at the picture, and still, quite evidently, not seeing it at all.

"Do you know, papa," I said, "the good ladies of this town would not believe your praise of me, if they could hear it? They think me a bas bleu, a philosopher in petticoats—what they call a strong-minded woman—meaning thereby a woman who can say nothing graceful and do nothing useful! That is all owing to the education you have given me, Monsieur le Docteur Franqueville."

Papa laughed, and held up his glass of wine to the light.

"George," he cried, gaily. "I propose a toast. That is a real English custom, eh? Well, my toast is, 'La femme savante, who can dissect a theory and compose a soup;' Fill your glass, my boy, and do honour to my toast."

Then, at last, George withdrew his eyes from the picture, looked at my father's bright face, smiled, and pressed my hand under the table.

"I drink," said he, "to my dear wife."

I think that those weeks during which my father staid with us were the happiest of my married life. George liked my father, and got on well with him. I was even surprised once or twice by finding him listening with eager interest to papa's exposition of some new ideas in medicine. I remarked to George that this surprised me. He answered, "Aye, but this is not abstract speculation, you know. Here are experiments and results, and direct alleviation of human suffering. It is a grand profession—that of medicine! I honour your father, and men like him."

In brief, papa's visit passed smoothly and pleasantly. We would have had him prolong it, but he declared that was impossible. His patients wanted him;

the hospital authorities missed him; Julie threatened to marry the black pastry-cook, if he did not return at the time he had promised!

When he bade me adieu, my father took my face between his hands, and, looking at me earnestly, said, "Désirée, you have a good husband. Do all you can to hold fast his love."

"I shall do my duty, papa. I hope you think I am doing my duty?"

"Oh, yes; certainly. You are irreproachable; but—"

"But what, papa?"

"Suppose you were to be a little more expansive, a little more loving in your manner, a little more sympathetic with George's likings and feelings—hein?"

"I am not expansive by nature, papa."

"H'm! the heart may improve by practice, as well as the brain."

"It is not a question of hearts at all. I see life as it is. I cannot wear rose-coloured spectacles; violà tout!"

"Désirée, my child, you mistake your own nature. You cold! you calm and impassive! Bah! there is fire under your snow, Madame Lester. Fire is a good servant, but a bad master. Use yours to warm and brighten your home. Don't shut it down by force of will. Some day it may blaze up and devour you."

"Papa, you are an enthusiast. You are young, and eager, and can talk yourself into a glow. Monsieur le Docteur Franqueville, do you know that you are some ten years my junior?"

"Ah, Désirée, I wish you had some occupation which brought you into immediate contact with suffering and sorrow. If you could be a hospital nurse for six months, I believe you would be a happier woman for ever after."

"Rather a paradoxical idea, isn't it, papa, to teach me to be an optimist by witnessing anguish?"

"Yes; a paradox, if you like; but I hold to it. The cure would be, in a measure, homœopathic. Bon Dieu, child, how like your mother you grow! I never observed the resemblance so strong before."

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